

Assessment Cycle 2024-2025

Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Human Resources

Division or Department: Institutional Effectiveness

Prepared by: Frank Hall

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Approved by: Roni Biscoe

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Northwestern Mission. Northwestern State University is a responsive, student-oriented institution committed to acquiring, creating, and disseminating knowledge through innovative teaching, research, and service. With its certificate, undergraduate, and graduate programs, Northwestern State University prepares its increasingly diverse student population to contribute to an inclusive global community with a steadfast dedication to improving our region, State, and nation.

The Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Human Resources is a responsive administrative service and support unit that provides university leaders with information to use in strategic planning, evidence-based decision-making, and human resource programs and services. The Office assesses, collects, analyzes, reports, and disseminates data on behalf of the University and supports all University units in assessment-based enhancement efforts. Reporting of information is in accordance with the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) and federal and state regulations. The Office develops and delivers innovative human resource programs and services designed to support the mission of the University, including its core services and competencies such as staffing, employee relations, organizational and employee development, risk management, compensation and benefits, human resource information management, and regulatory compliance.

The Office of Institutional Effectiveness assists university leaders with strategic planning, assessment, and evidence-based decision-making. The Office assesses, collects, analyzes, reports, and disseminates data on behalf of the University and supports all university units in assessment-based enhancement efforts. It also assists in reporting information from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) and federal and state regulations.

Methodology: The assessment process includes:

- (1) Data from assessment tools (direct & indirect and quantitative & qualitative) are collected and returned to the executive director.
- (2) The executive director will analyze the data to determine whether the applicable outcomes are met:
- (3) Results from the assessment will be discussed with the appropriate staff;

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- (4) Individual meetings will be held with staff as required (present justification);
- (5) In consultation with the staff and senior leadership, the executive director will determine proposed changes to measurable outcomes, assessment tools for the next assessment period, and, where needed, service changes.

Institutional Effectiveness

Service Outcomes:

SO 1. Ensures the institution engages in ongoing, integrated, and institution-wide research-based planning and evaluation processes that (1) incorporate a systematic review of institutional mission, goals, and outcomes; (2) result in continuing enhancement in institutional quality; and (3) demonstrate the institution is effectively accomplishing its mission.

Measure 1.1.

The University compiles and publicizes its documented institutional effectiveness process. The target is an informed approach, with 100% of the 165 academic and administrative units completing the process annually per the published timelines for annual assessment submission while meeting the assessment element (s) requirements. Once complete, the assessments are available on the Director of Institutional Effectiveness website.

Finding. Target Met.

Analysis. In AC 2023-2024, the target was met.

Following a comprehensive analysis of the 2023-2024 results, the following changes were made to foster continuous institutional enhancement in AC 2024 -2025. The DIE leveraged the SACSCOC Review Committee tracking tool and knowledge gained to support the University's long-range planning calendar to inform strategic planning and assessment-related decision-making. The DIE collaborated with the University of Louisiana System (ULS) Strategic Plan by providing a copy of Northwestern's Strategic Plan and discussing the process with the contracted agency on the mechanics of how Northwestern conducts long-range planning and assessment.

As a result, in 2024-2025, the target was Met.

Decision, action, or recommendation. In AC 2024-2025, the target was Met.

Following a comprehensive analysis of the 2024-2025 results, the following strategic actions will be undertaken to foster continuous institutional enhancement in AC 2025 - 2026. The DIE intends to broaden institutional knowledge of the current planning

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process so that more informed changes can be made to adapt the plan to the ever-changing higher education environment.

These changes will enhance and prepare the University to maintain a viable, sustained effort to comply with all SACSCOC reports and maintain an almost real-time picture of the University's mission accomplishment.

Source Map:

Resources Manual for the Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement, Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges
University of Louisiana System Board of Supervisors
Louisiana Board of Regents Higher Education Bylaws

Measure 1.2.

The University has established a systematic review of the institutional mission, goals, and outcomes. Per the strategic plan development process, the university requested revalidation and/or approval of the mission, vision statement, and core values through our Board of Trustees once every five years. The target is to conduct at least one comprehensive annual analysis of the mission, objectives, and metrics.

Finding. Target Met

Analysis. In AC 2023-2024, the target was met.

Based on the 2023-2024 results analysis, the following changes were made to foster continuous institutional enhancement in AC 2024 -2025. The University submitted its mission statement, vision, and core values for revalidation by the ULS in preparation for its SACSCOC Differentiated Review in 2026.

This extension facilitates nesting the University Strategic Plan with the Board of Regents' Strategic goals for Northwestern while improving alignment with their recently published master plan. It also aligns with the ULS, the University's governing board's Strategic Plan. In addition to revalidating the University Mission, the University has reset its priorities in alignment with its new president. Developing a new, revised strategy continues to drive organizational enhancement. As a result, the target was met in 2024-2025.

Based on the 2024-2025 results analysis, the University plans to refine the comprehensive timeline/plan for integrating the new strategic plan spanning 2023-2028 into the institutional effectiveness model, thereby establishing it as an unfiltered view of how well the University is accomplishing its mission in AC 2025-2026.

Decision, action, or recommendation. The target was successfully achieved in AC 2024-2025. Based on the 2023-2024 results analysis, the following strategic actions will

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be undertaken to foster continuous institutional enhancement in AC 2025 -2026. The DIE will incorporate the new Presidents' guidance into the Strategic Plan in preparation for its SACSCOC Differentiated Review in 2026.

These changes seeks to ensure the University's mission maintains congruence with the Board of Regents and the University of Louisiana Systems' strategic framework while demonstrating to SACSCOC the continuous nature of the University's strategic planning efforts.

Source Map:

Resources Manual for the Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement, Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges University of Louisiana System Board of Supervisors
Louisiana Board of Regents Higher Education Bylaws

Measure 1.3.

University senior leaders brief the University President on the findings of the strategic plan assessment cycle to better inform strategic decision-making. This ensures the University accomplishes its mission and maximizes resources for targeted enhancement in institutional quality. The target is to conduct and document the annual assessment briefing, capturing and actioning areas of concern.

Finding. Target Met.

In AC 2023-2024, the target was met.

Analysis. Based on the 2023-2024 results analysis, the following changes were made to foster continuous institutional enhancement in AC 2024 -2025. The Key findings brief took place in late September to facilitate the completion of the University Strategic Plan. They set the conditions for the new President and the University's SACSCOC Compliance certification preparation in 2024-2025.

The target was successfully achieved in 2024-2025. Based on the 2024-2025 results analysis, the DIE will revise the AC 2025-2026 Assessment Cycle to capture the guidance from the new president, the ULS Strategic Plan, and the Board of Regents Strategic Plan for Northwestern.

Decision, action, or recommendation. The target was met in AC 2024-2025. Based on the 2024-2025 results analysis, the following strategic actions will be undertaken to foster continuous institutional enhancement in AC 2025 -2026: the DIE will revise the AC 2025-2026 Assessment Cycle to capture the guidance from the new president, the ULS Strategic Plan, and the Board of Regents Strategic Plan for Northwestern.

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These changes will allow the SACSCOC Review Committee (SRC) to devote more time to completing accreditation standards associated with its differentiated review.

Source Map:

Resources Manual for the Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement, Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges University of Louisiana System Board of Supervisors
Louisiana Board of Regents Higher Education Bylaws

SO 2. Assist with the identification of key indicators of performance related to the strategic plan, academic programs, and academic support units.

Measure 2.1.

Each of the 164 academic programs and administrative units has identified expected outcomes, assessed the extent to which it achieves these outcomes, and provided evidence of enhancement based on analysis of the results. The target is 100% compliance.

Finding. Target Met

Analysis. The target was successfully achieved in 2023-2024. Based on the 2023-2024 results analysis for 2024-2025, the Director of Institutional Effectiveness revised the 'by the numbers' assessment tool for unit and program coordinators to ensure they wrote the requirement in the correct format using SACSCOC language, thereby driving continuous enhancement.

As a result, the target was met in AC 2024-2025; 165 academic programs and administrative units have identified expected outcomes, assessed the extent to which they achieve these outcomes, and provided evidence of enhancement based on analysis of the results. The target is 100% compliance.

Decision, action, or recommendation. The target was successfully achieved in 2024-2025. Based on the 2024-2025 results analysis, in 2025-2026, the Director of Institutional Effectiveness seeks to ensure the academic program count is synchronized with the Director of Institutional Research and that a by-unit accounting is conducted to provide the maximum number of units participating in the assessment process.

By doing so, the University will maintain a realistic and accurate picture of itself and its mission accomplishment.

Source Map:

Resources Manual for the Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality

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Enhancement, Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on
Colleges University of Louisiana System Board of Supervisors
Louisiana Board of Regents Higher Education Bylaws

Measure 2.2.

The University will produce a holistic University assessment report using the Strategic Plan AC 2024-2025 assessment findings and the 165 separate academic programs and administrative unit assessments. The assessment report will highlight key findings in strategic decision-making and resource allocation. The report and briefing will be completed in August of each Academic Year. The target is to leverage a completed Strategic Plan Assessment and 100% of individual program and unit assessments in developing and presenting an annual assessment report by August 30 of the academic year.

Finding. Target Met.

Analysis. The target was successfully achieved in AC 2023-2024. Following a comprehensive analysis of the AC 2023-2024 results, in 2024-2025, the Director of Institutional Effectiveness refocused the brief on areas needing enhancement rather than those of success. By concentrating time and resources on the areas that required attention, we were better able to drive continuous improvement.

Decision, action or recommendation.

The target in AC 2024-2025 was met. Based on the AC 2024-2025 results analysis, the Director of Institutional Effectiveness will work with the President and Chief of Staff to ensure the focus remains on looking forward in time and driving organizational enhancement in line with the BOR and ULS Strategic Plans.

By focusing time and resources on the future, the University can drive continuous enhancement.

Source Map:

Resources Manual for the Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement, Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges University of Louisiana System Board of Supervisors
Louisiana Board of Regents Higher Education Bylaws

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SO 3. Facilitate all aspects related to accreditation, including standards compliance, applications, reviews, and self-evaluation processes and documents.

Measure 3.1.

All SACSCOC Standards are apportioned to the appropriate university office for incorporation and integration into daily operations.

Finding. Target Met.

Analysis. In 2023-2024, the target was achieved. Based on the analysis of the 2023-2024 results, in 2024-2025, the Director of Institutional Effectiveness developed a comprehensive approach for producing the Differentiated SACSCOC report. Each standard was organized in a folder containing a draft and the associated reference material. The plan is designed to maximize the output from the Fifth-Year Report, focusing on the new standards included in the Differentiated Review Process. Consequently, in 2024-2025, the target was achieved.

Decision, action, or recommendation. The target was met in AC 2024-2025. Based on the 2024-2025 results analysis, the following strategic actions will be undertaken to foster continuous institutional enhancement in AC 2025 -2026. The DIE will develop a calendar that spreads the work associated with creating the Differentiated Review Report over time to ensure that comprehensive, deliberate products are produced.

These changes ensure the Differentiated Report is developed and submitted on time.

Source Map:

Resources Manual for the Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement, Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges University of Louisiana System Board of Supervisors
Louisiana Board of Regents Higher Education Bylaws

Measure 3.2.

All university strategic planning and assessment documents will be stored to ensure that the information remains secure and accessible from any location via the Internet.

Finding. Target Met

Analysis. The target was met in AC 2023-2024. Based on the 2023-2024 results analysis, the following changes were made to foster continuous institutional enhancement in AC 2024 -2025. The DIE established a process to ensure

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documents are revised as new versions are produced. The DIE collaborated with the contractor and university marketing and branding to ensure the new site facilitates the same comprehensive, user-friendly site for strategic planning and assessment-related material. Therefore, the target was met in AC 2024-2025.

Decision, action, or recommendation. The target was successfully achieved in AC 2024-2025. Based on the 2024-2025 results analysis, the following strategic actions will be undertaken to foster continuous institutional enhancement in AC 2025 -2026. The DIE will increase access to site management to enhance personnel changes.

These changes will enhance and document the library's future relevance to planning, assessment, and SACSCOC compliance.

Source Map:

Resources Manual for the Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement, Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges University of Louisiana System Board of Supervisors
Louisiana Board of Regents Higher Education Bylaws

Comprehensive Summary of Key evidence of enhancement based on the analysis of results.

- The DIE leveraged the SACSCOC Review Committee tracking tool and knowledge gained to support the University's long-range planning calendar to inform strategic planning and assessment-related decision-making. The DIE collaborated with the University of Louisiana System Strategic (ULS) Plan by providing a copy of Northwestern's Strategic Plan and discussing the process with the contracted agency on the mechanics of how Northwestern conducts long-range planning and assessment.
- The University submitted its mission statement, vision, and core values for revalidation by the ULS in preparation for its SACSCOC Differentiated Review in 2026. This extension facilitates aligning the University Strategic Plan with the Board of Regents' strategic goals for Northwestern while improving coherence with their recently published master plan. It also aligns with the ULS, the University's governing board's Strategic Plan. In addition to revalidating the University Mission, the University has reset its priorities to align with its new president. Developing a revised strategy continues to drive organizational enhancement. As a result, the target was met in 2024-2025.
- The Key findings brief occurred in late September to support the completion of the University Strategic Plan. They established the conditions for the new President and the University's SACSCOC Compliance certification preparation in 2024-2025.

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- The Director of Institutional Effectiveness revised the 'by the numbers' assessment tool for unit and program coordinators to ensure they write the requirement in the correct format using SACSCOC language, thereby driving continuous enhancement.
- The Director of Institutional Effectiveness refocused the brief on the areas needing improvement rather than those of success. By concentrating time and resources on areas that required attention, we were better positioned to drive continuous improvement.
- To drive the cycle of enhancement, more effort was spent on developing new and enhanced strategies to strengthen Strategic Focus Areas and to create a new Strategic Focus Area: cultural competence.
- The DIE established a process to ensure that documents are revised as new versions are produced. The DIE collaborated with contractor and university marketing and branding to ensure that the new site facilitates a comprehensive and user-friendly experience for strategic planning and assessment-related materials. Therefore, the target was met in AC 2024-2025.

Summary of Evidence-Based Improvements.

- Strategic plan integration with ULS and BOR frameworks.
- Revised assessment tools increased alignment with accreditation standards.
- Focus shifted toward areas requiring enhancement.
- Cultural competence was added as a new strategic focus.
- Improved online access to planning and assessment documentation.

Plan of action moving forward.

The University Leverages the Institutional Effectiveness Model systematically and comprehensively to push closer to its vision. The University's senior leadership remains the force behind establishing a culture of continuous assessment. The assessment's purpose, reasoning, and value are slowly becoming clear to university administrators, faculty, and staff. The tangible value in this process directly impacts organizational enhancement and is being more understood across campus. The University continues to right-size the assessment process. The University has completed seven iterations, so its leadership has a far better understanding of what should/needs to be assessed. The task is to fine-tune what needs to be assessed, determine how best to evaluate it, and leverage the results to drive continuous enhancement.